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**MESSRS. ARTHUR CLEAVE AND COMPANY, LIMITED.**

Proprietors N.Z. Sporting and Dramatic Review, Licensed Victuallers' Gazette.

Dear Sir,

At the Annual Meeting of the Licensed Victuallers' Association of New Zealand, held on the 19th October, 1910, a resolution was unanimously adopted constituting the Sporting and Dramatic Review, the official organ of the Association for the Dominion.

H. J. WILLIAMS.

Secretary N.Z. L.V. Association.  
Wellington, October 20, 1910.

**THE LIQUOR QUESTION IN NEW ZEALAND.**

**THE PRIZE ESSAY.**

For Messrs. D. and J. McCallum's prize, offered for the best article written by a New Zealander, of at least five years' standing, on the above question, several essays were received, the award being made as follows:—

"Moderation"—Mr. J. S. Palmer ... 1  
"Liberty"—Mr. W. H. Connors .... 2

We are publishing the prize essay this week and propose to follow it up with the article by "Liberty" (Mr. W. H. Connors) in the succeeding issue.

**NO-LICENSE ETHICS.**

**A MATTER OF CHALLENGES.**

**MR. WESLEY SPRAGG AND THE BREWERS.**

When Mr. Maguire issued his challenge to the Revd. R. B. S. Hammond to discuss the issues raised by the Prohibitionist arguments of the latter, the "No-license" people behind Mr. Hammond, practically declined to meet that gentleman, unless he was in a position to show that he was somebody and something that he was not. As was pointed out in these columns last week, they fenced with the business, and, in consequence, Mr. Maguire, who was desirous of debating the question on purely moral, social and hygienic lines, engaged the Auckland Opera House at his own cost, and undertook to place the other side of the Prohibition question before the public. It was not until Mr. Maguire had done this, that the No-license cum Prohibition party, recognised that they had made a mistake, in declining to meet Mr. Maguire; or rather, to allow Mr. Hammond to do so, and, following a street corner meeting, held on Wyndham and Queen Streets on Thursday last, in which a Mr. Sloane appears to have taken part, and endeavoured, more or less successfully, to place the other side of the argument before the crowd then assembled, Mr. Wesley Spragg issued a challenge to Mr. Sloane, the organiser of the liquor trade, to a debate between himself as the accredited representative of the Brewers and Wine and Spirit Merchants' Association, or any other person so accredited with a representative of the Auckland Provincial No-license Council." The terms and conditions of the debate were set forth in the challenge, which was replied to in very sensible fashion by Mr. Leo M. Myers, president of the Auckland Provincial Council. Mr. Myers made the only possible reply that could be made to such a proposition, more especially when it is remembered that the people issuing the challenge are not amenable to either logic, rhyme, or reason, where the liquor traffic is concerned. Mr. Myers, after pointing out that "the Mr. Sloane to

whom Mr. Spragg refers in his challenge is not, as the latter asserts, the accredited representative," said: "The Council is not inclined to take Mr. Spragg's challenge seriously, as it is convinced that every intelligent elector who is prepared to look upon the Prohibition question dispassionately will at once acknowledge and admit that no good public end or finality is likely to be achieved by a debate, as suggested by Mr. Spragg, in view of the fact that the verdict thereon will of necessity solely depend upon the position to which side is fortunate enough to pack the building or place in which the debate takes place with a majority of its partisans. A verdict obtained in this manner by either side would be farcical in the extreme. A proper expression of public opinion on the question of Prohibition can" Mr. Myers added, "only be obtained at the Local Option Poll, and the Council confidently hopes that by the time the poll, the electors will have been so educated and so thoroughly grasped the true meaning and effect of the 'No-license' and 'Prohibition' issues as to express their verdict with no uncertain voice by."

It may be said in closing that as Mr. Maguire's challenge conclusively proved, the question is not merely one between the brewers, wine and spirit merchants and hotelkeepers and Prohibitionist party, but rather affects the interests of a very large section of the public whose rights, liberties and privileges are imperilled by the aggressive attitude of the no-liquorites. And as it is with these people that the final verdict rests, Mr. Myers was well advised in taking the stand he did.

**THE LIQUOR PROBLEM IN NEW ZEALAND.**

**PROHIBITION WOULD FAIL TO REMEDY IT.**

**THE FACTS REVIEWED.**

**PRIZE ESSAY BY "MODERATION."  
(Mr. J. S. Palmer.)**

Fifteen years ago the people of New Zealand were paying £477,264 in Customs and Excise duties on Spirits, Wines, Ales and Beer. The National Drink Bill, as estimated by the Rev. Edward Walker, of the New Zealand Alliance, was then placed at £2,265,900, or £2 19s 8½d per head of the population, which was then stated at 757,503 persons. For the year ending 31st March, 1911, the duties amounted to £802,375 and the National Drink Bill as stated by Mr Walker was £3,803,438, or £3 13s 1¼d per head of the population then returned at 1,040,442 persons. The increase thus represents an additional expenditure in taxation (Customs and Excise revenue) of £325,111, and an additional general expenditure, on the part of the people, of £1,537,538, or 13s 4¼d per head.

**IN CURIOUS CONTRAST.**

At the 1908 Local Option polls, the No-License vote stood at 221,471 an increase of 123,159, as compared with the vote taken in 1896, when 98,312 votes were cast for No-Licenses. The Continuance-vote had also increased, although not in the same proportion, the votes cast for License in the last named year being 139,580, as compared with 188,140 in 1908—an increase of 48,560.

During the fifteen years (1896-1910) the consumption of liquor per head of the population (including Maoris) rose as follows:—

	1896	1910	Increase
	Gal.	Gal.	Gal.
Beer .....	7.453	9.294	1.841
Spirits ...	0.605	0.737	0.132
Wine .....	0.133	0.147	0.014

To understand the true significance of these figures it has to be remembered that, whereas in 1896 the whole of New Zealand was, in technical parlance, "wet," in 1910 there were twelve "dry" districts in the Do-

minion. The electors in those districts comprised more than a sixth of the adult population of the country. This is shown by the fact that in 1908, 85,393 out of the 537,003 electors on the Dominion rolls, were residents of the No-License districts of Eden, Ohinemuri, Masterton, Wellington, South Wellington Suburbs, Bruce, Grey Lynn, Ashburton, Oamaru, Clutha, Mataura and Invercargill. As adult suffrage obtains in this country, it follows that the electoral rolls are practically synonymous with the adult population of the country.

**THE POSITION IN A NUTSHELL.**

Here then is the position. After twelve years experience of No-License and with more than a sixth of the population debarred from purchasing alcoholic liquors in their own districts (and outside of these districts except under semi-prohibitive conditions, the National Drink Bill of New Zealand has risen by some 60 per cent, from £2,265,900 in 1896 to £3,803,438, in 1910. The average consumption of liquor per head of the people also shows the very considerable increase of 1,841 gallons of beer, 0.132 gallons of spirits, and 0.014 gallons of wine. The average expenditure per head of the population was 13s 4¼d more in 1910 than it was in 1896.

**DO NEW ZEALANDERS DRINK IMMODERATELY?**

What then? Are New Zealanders less temperate in their habits than they were fifteen years ago, or do they drink more than the people of the other Australian States, and of the Mother Country? The facts hardly point in that direction; although, to be quite candid, it has to be admitted that there has been an increase in the number of convictions for drunkenness, as these rose from 6.82 per 1000 in 1896 (the percentage was as high as 9.18 in 1890) to 10.32 in 1901, to 10.52 in 1906, and to 11.01 in 1909, which is the last year for which the official figures are available. But, as regards the convictions of the latter year, it is stated that "the number of distinct persons brought before the Court for this offence (drunkenness) was not more than 70 per cent of the total charges," and, as Maoris are excluded from the calculation, it is evident the average would be more correctly stated at from 6 to 7 persons per 1000 inhabitants, or slightly more than one-half per cent of the population. On a 5 years' average, moreover, the consumption of beer per head of the population was 22½ gallons in the United Kingdom, as against our 9.294 gallons. In Western Australia it was 17.92 gallons; in Victoria 12.35 gallons; in Queensland 10.98 gallons; in New South Wales 9.96 gallons; in Tasmania 9.20 gallons and in South Australia 9.08 gallons. The average annual consumption of spirits in the United Kingdom was one gallon per head. In only three of the Australian States, however, did it exceed the New Zealand average of 0.737 gallons, viz: 1.10 gallons in Western Australia, 0.89 gallons in Queensland, and 0.75 gallons in New South Wales. In Victoria it was 0.60 gallons, in Tasmania, 0.55 gallons, and in South Australia 0.51 gallons. Judged by British and Australian standards, therefore, it cannot be said that New Zealanders either drink immoderately, or that they are in any way an intemperate people.

**LIQUOR IN NO-LICENSE DISTRICTS.**

The opponents of the liquor traffic allege that under No-license, the consumption of alcoholic liquors in districts that have voted out licenses, shows a very appreciable decline and they argue that, consequently, the consumption in licensed areas must have increased enormously during the last fifteen years. But such conclusions are based on altogether wrong premises. They assume that the only liquor that enters No-License areas, is that that is declared to the Clerk of the Courts, the law prescribing that notification must be sent to that offi-

cial of all liquors sent into the No-License district. The law, however, allows any resident in such a district, to take into it a quart of spirits, or a gallon of beer, every day of the week in which it is lawful for him to purchase liquor in a licensed area. He may do this, moreover, without reporting the fact. In the case of the suburban electorates that have carried "No-License," there is practically no check upon the amount of liquor that is taken in by the residents without notification. In other electorates, adjoining licensed areas, it is notorious that advantage is taken of every loophole that will enable liquor to be smuggled across the No-license border. To argue, therefore, that because the official returns show only very small quantities of liquor sent into the No-License electorates, that the actual consumption is so much less than formerly, is as fallacious as it is misleading. It is not possible, as a matter of fact, to state even approximately, the amount of liquor that is consumed in No-License electorates. Grey Lynn may be taken as a case in point. There is good reason for believing that, per head of the population, the consumption of liquor is as great in Grey Lynn as it is in Auckland, because practically the whole population of that suburb is dependent upon the city for its existence, and draws much of its maintenance from town establishments. Grey Lynites probably use the Auckland hotels as freely as the residents of the city themselves, and they take home their supplies without being hindered in any way. Just over the confines of the electorate, there are several hotels that are probably doing more business with the people of Grey Lynn than with those of the city proper. Eden is very similarly situated; so also are Wellington Suburbs and, within easy reach of Ohinemuri there are licensed houses at Te Aroha, at Waihou, and the Thames. Masterton is in close touch with Taratahi and Carterton, from which towns the residents of the No-License centre can, and do, obtain supplies without an efficient check being placed upon them. In the South Island, Ashburton, Oamaru, Mataura, Bruce, Clutha and Invercargill, are all more or less favourably situated for obtaining liquor, and as against, or rather in addition to, the known quantities of liquor entering these districts, must be placed the unknown quantities that are consumed by the residents. The prosecutions that are continually taking place in the leading towns of No-License districts, further indicate that the sly grog seller finds the illicit traffic in liquor a very remunerative proposition. The liquor sold by him is, generally speaking, bad—more often than not, in the case of ardent liquors, methylated spirits, thinly disguised and coloured, are sold as whisky, the deleterious effect of the vile compound being seen in the case of the inebriates, who are arrested by the police from time to time in No-License centres.

**IS MONEY EXPENDED ON LIQUOR WASTED.**

The prohibitionist assumes, most unwarrantably, that the money expended upon liquor is all "waste." Returning to Mr. Walker's figures for a moment, let us see what they actually mean from the economic standpoint. £3,803,438 were (according to Mr. Walker) expended in the Dominion last year in alcoholic liquors. Write off a million, first of all as the sum paid in general and local taxation—Customs, and Excise duties, license fees, rates, etc. That is well within the mark, because no account is taken of the income tax, which must be very considerable, if our friends the prohibitionists are right in their estimate of the profits made by those engaged in the trade. Then deduct the wages earned by those engaged in the breweries, the wine and spirit stores, and in the hotels, etc., say, 11,000 persons earning approximately £2,000,000 annually. Add to these, the moneys spent with the farmers for barley, hops, etc.,